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ABSTRACT

The ability of principals to evaluate special education teachers is an area of concern due to the principals' lack of training or experience in special education. Available research findings clearly indicate the need for training of principals in special education concerns. A statewide survey of principals was conducted to determine their levels of knowledge and needs in special education. A total of 616 questionnaires was sent to New Mexico principals; 12.7 percent responded to the mailing. Responses were examined to determine geographical location and school level. Knowledge level and need for training were compared to determine if a significant difference existed. Some findings include: rural principals appear more interested than urban principals in special education training workshops, and secondary principals appear to be less interested than elementary principals in special education workshops. A list of references, a description of the workshops, and the questionnaire are included with the paper. (MD)

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Special Education Needs of Regular Education Administrators

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Presented at the Annual Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association Conference, Tucson, AZ, November 2, 1983

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Introduction

Although the training of principals in special education concerns has received only limited attention to date, the available research findings clearly indicate the need for such training. In their review of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) special education programs, Twitchell and Foster (1980) found an urgent need for inservice training of both staff and administrative personnel at the nine BIA schools that they studied. Davis (1980) conducted an analysis of the formal training in special education that principals acquired in the state of Maine. He defined an expanded role of the principal to include the following: a) support of regular classroom teachers in the development of individualized programs for special education pupils; b) supervision of pupil personnel services; c) establishment of communication among regular classroom teachers, special educators and parents of both handicapped and non-handicapped students; d) monitoring of activities to ensure compliance with pertinent federal and state regulations; and e) the conduct of inservice activities for the entire staff (Davis, 1980, p. 89). Fifty-nine percent of the principals responded that they had not had coursework at any level including continuing education in special education. Only 14.9% pf the principals had taken one course, and 15.7% had taken two courses in special education

(Davis, 1980, p. 91). Previous exposure of the principals to special education programs was also very limited with 77.7% indicating tht they had "none" to "some" exposure (Davis, 1980, p. 91). When questionned, 85% of the principals felt that such training was "very important", "extremely important", or "moderately important."

Due to their lack of training or experience in special education, the ability of building principals to evaluate special educators has been an area of special concern (Stile, 1981; Winborne, 1981). Stile (1981) has observed that:

> Although school principals are involved in the evaluation of special education personnel for contract-related decisions and/or for purposes of instructional improvement, it is often the case that these administrators have had little or no special education training or classroom experience.

With the above described deficiences in mind, a special project was proposed and subsequently funded by the Handicapped Personnel Preparation Program, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Service (OSERS), U.S. Department of Education. The work reported herein addressed a specific objective of the funded project which was to conduct a state-wide survey of building principals to determine their levels of knowledge and needs in special education. The admininstrators were contacted by mail and instructed to complete a 24-item project-developed needs

assessment instrument if they were interested in attending at least one of two regional workshops planned for the 1983-84 Academic Year. As of September 2, 1983, 78 building principals had indicated their interest in participating in the project by returning a completed instrument.

Purpose

The five-fold purpose of the present paper and presentation is as follows: a) to describe the needs assessment instrument; b) to give participants an opportunity to use the instrument; c) to obtain information which can be used for further refinements of the instrument; d) to report previous findings and d) to describe responses of the participants in the present meeting.

Methodology

A self-report needs assessment instrument was constructed based upon information obtained from a reveiw of seven major special education administration texts conducted by the Project Director. Twenty-four items were identified. A five point rating scale was used. Instruments were sent in May, 1983 to all identified public school regular education building principals in New Mexico. Principals were requested to indicate their knowledge level

and need for training for each of the twenty-four items.

Responses were examined to determine geographical location (i.e., rural vs urban) and school level (i.e., elementary vs secondary). Reported knowledge levels and need for training were ranked. Knowledge level and need for training for each item were compared to determine if a significant difference existed between knowledge level and need for training using the nonparametric Wilcoxin Signed Rank test for paired difference.

Results

The Regular Education Administrator instrument was sent to all identified public school regular education building principals in New Mexico. A total of 616 questionnaires were sent. Of these, 392 were sent to elementary principals, 213 to secondary principals and eleven were sent to principals administering K-12 programs. Table I shows the number of questionnaires sent to building principals by level and by location. For purposes of the present paper it was determined that urban responses would be those from personnel who indicated an Albuquerque, Las Cruces or Santa Fe business address (Edington, 1983).

Table I. Number of Regular Education Administrator Instruments Sent to Public School Regular Education Building Principals in New Mexico

Location	Elementary	Secondary	K-12	Total
Rural	286	159	11	456
Urban	106	54	0	160
Total	392	213	11	616

A total of seventy-eight questionnaires were returned, sixty-five of which were useable. Table II lists the number of responses by level and location.

Table II. Number of Regular Education Administrator Instruments Returned From Public School Regular Education Building Principals in New Mexico

Location	Elementary	Secondary	K-12	Total
Rural	45 (15.7%)	16 (10.1%)	3 (27.3%)	64 (14.0%)
Urban	13 (12.2%)	1 (1.2%)	0	14 (8.8%)
Total	58 (14.8%)	17 (8.0%)	3 (27.3%)	78 (12.7%)

Table III lists the ranks of the twenty-four items for knowledge level and need for training (1 = lowest knowledge or need; 5 = highest)

Table III. Ranks of Knowledge and Need for Twenty-four Items on the Regular Education Administrator Questionnaire (1 = low; 5 = high; N = 65)

Item	Knowledge Rank	Knowledge Mean	Need Rank	Need Mean
1. Technology applications	1	1.8	24	4.1
2. What research says	3	2.3	20	3.8
3. Federal mandates	20	3.2	8	3.2
4. Local compliance	24	3.4	1	2.8
5. Building principal's role in SPED programs	22.5	3.3	7	3.2
6. SPED administrator's role in SPED programs	12	2.7	2.5	3.0
7. Facilities for disabled	18	3.0	2.5	3.0
8. SPED budgets/funding	8.5	2.6	4	3.1
9. Parent involvement	17	2.9	6	3.2
10. Due process/mediation	13	2.7	10	3.4
11. Support groups/agencies	5	2.4	12.5	3.4
12. Child abuse	22.5	3.3	12.5	3.4
13. Rural SPED development	2	2.2	5	3.1
14. Working with SPED personnel	21	3.3	9	3.3

Item	Knowledge Rank	Knowledge Mean	Need Rank	Need Mean
Needs/characteristics of:				
15. Behaviorially disordered	14	2.8	23	4.0
16. Communication disordered	10	2.6	22	3.9
17. Gifted	16	2.9	21	3.8
18. Hearing impaired	6	2.5	18.5	3.6
19. Learning disabled	19	3.1	18.5	3.6
20. Mentally handicapped	15	2.8	11	3.4
21. Multiply handicapped	7	2.5	17	3.6
22. Physically impaired	11	2.7	14	3.4
23. Severely handicapped	4	2.3	15	3.6
24. Visually impaired	8.5	2.6	16	3.6

The Wincoxin Signed Rank test for paired difference was employed to test the significance of the difference between knowledge level and need for training. Sixteen items (67%) were found to be significantly different at the 0.05 level between reported knowledge level and need for training. Table IV lists the items which showed a significant difference and Table V lists the items which failed to show a significant difference between knowledge level and need for training.

Table IV. Items Which Showed a Difference Between Knowledge Level and Need for Training at the 0.05 level (1 = low; 5 = high; N = 65)

Item	Knowledge Level Rank	Knowledge Level Mean	Training Need Rank	Training Need Mean
1. Technology applications	1	1.8	24	4.1
2. What research says	3	2.3	20	3.8
4. Local compliance	24	3.4	1	2.8
8. SPED budgets/funding	8.5	2.6	4	3.1
10. Due process/mediation	13	2.7	10	3.4
11. Support groups/agencies	5	2.4	12.5	3.4
13. Rural SPED development	2	2.2	5	3.1
Needs/characteristics of:				
15. Behaviorially disordered	14	2.8	23	4.0
16. Communication disordered	10	2.6	22	3.9
17. Gifted	16	2.9	21	3.8
18. Hearing impaired	6	2.5	18.5	3.6
20. Mentally handicapped	15	2.8	11	3.4
21. Multiply handicapped	7	2.5	17	3.6
22. Physically impaired	11	2.7	14	3.4
23. Severely handicapped	4	2.3	15	3.6
24. Visually impaired	8.5	2.6	16	3.6

Table V. Items Which Fail to Show a Difference Between Knowledge Level and Need for Training at 0.05 Level (1 = low; 5 = high; N = 65)

Item	Knowledge Rank	Knowledge Mean	Need Rank	Need Mean
3. Federal mandates	20	3.2	8	3.2
5. Building principal's role in SPED programs	22.5	3.3	7	3.2
6. SPED administrator's role in SPED programs	12	2.7	2.5	3.0
7. Facilities for disabled	18	3.0	2.5	3.0
9. Parent involvement	17	2.9	6	3.2
12. Child abuse	22.5	3.3	12.5	3.4
14. Working with SPED personnel	21	3.3	9	3.3
Needs/characteristics				
19. Learning disabled	19	3.1	18.5	3.6

Summary and Conclusions

A total of 616 instruments were sent to building principals in the State of New Mexico. While a low total (12.7%) response rate was obtained, it should be noted that only those administrators interested in attending the project's regional workshops were urged to rspond. Such a low response rate may indicate an inability to travel, lack of interest in spending additional training time relative to low incidence student populations and/or it may have been

the case that the buildings of non-respondents did not contain special education programs.

Local Compliance (Item 4) was the only item which showed a significantly higher knowledge level than need for training. This may mean that respondents felt relatively comfortable with this topic and previous training. All other items showed a significantly higher need for training than knowledge level.

With the exception of the item with the highest knowledge level rank (Local Compliance), those items ranked highest in knowledge level failed to show a significant difference between knowledge level and need for training. The only item ranked lower than 17 which failed to show a significant difference between knowledge level and need for training was Item 6 (Special Education Administrator's Role in Special Education Programs). Here, both knowledge level and need for training were reported to be relatively low. Such a finding may indicate that this topic was not of primary importance to building principals.

If 3.0 is assumed to be average knowledge level or need for training, then respondents reported that on the average their knowledge level was less than average for seventeen of the items and that their need for training was average or greater than average for all but one item. The same item

(Technological Applications) was rated lowest for knowledge level and highest for need for training. Thus, building principals who responded felt inadequately trained in the area of technological applications and were interested in receiving training in this area. This finding may reflect the newness of technological applications such as microcomputers in education.

It appears that rural principals are more interested in training workshops centered around special education topics than are urban principals. This may be due to a lack of previous inservice training opportunities in rural school districts for regular education building principals or may be due a lack of available specialized services for special education students in rural school districts.

Secondary principals as a group appered to be less interested in workshops regarding special education topics than elementary principals. Their lack of interest may be due to a lower population of special education students in regular education programs at the secondary level or due to the relative newness of the emphasis upon the "least restrictive environment" or "mainstreaming" concept.

References

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EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIALIST/
REGULAR EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR
INSERVICE TRAINING PROJECT

Purpose

The following is the two-fold purpose of the project: to provide free inservice training for (a) New Mexico personnel working with preschool handicapped children and (b) regular education administrators interested in learning more about special education. Training will be provided through inservice workshops, coursework in the summer at New Mexico State University, and inservice training by teacher/specialists.

Regional Workshops

Free regional workshops will be given for preschool handicapped personnel and for regular education administrators. One CEU may be earned by participating in one of the workshops. The number of workshops and location will be determined by current funding.

Workshop topics will be selected based on level of need expressed by those planning to attend the workshops. Information will be gathered through needs assessment instruments sent to all known preschool handicapped programs/personnel in the state and to regular education administrators.

Summer Training

Six hours of graduate/undergraduate coursework in the area of preschool handicapped will be offered to New Mexico personnel who meet project criteria.

Criteria for selection include acceptance into a regular university program, current employment in a program in the state that serves early childhood handicapped children, recommendations by employers, expressed interest in continuing to teach in the field, and expressed interest in sharing information with others after training.

Number of students accepted into the program will depend on the number of preschool children enrolled in the summer program and on available funding. Training will include didactic coursework and an extensive practicum experience with preschool handicapped children.

Training by Teacher/Specialists

For those who wish to become teacher/specialists after summer training, an additional three hours may be contracted for during the fall semester. As part of the requirements, teacher/specialists will provide inservice training for others in their vicinity.

Additional Information

For additional information regarding the project, please contact:

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This project is made possible through a grant from the Office of Special Education, United States Office of Education (OSE/USOE), Federal Grant Number G008200490.

SELF ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT
FOR
DETERMINING SPECIAL EDUCATION
KNOWLEDGE LEVELS AND
INSERVICE TRAINING NEEDS
OF
REGULAR EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS

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1983

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SPECIALTIES
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Early Childhood Specialist/
Regular Education Administrator
Inservice Training Project

To: Regular Education Administrators
From: Stephen W. Stile and Sandra M. Abernathy, NMSU
Subject: Needs Assessment

The purpose of the Early Childhood Specialist/Regular Education Administrator Inservice Training Project at New Mexico State University, under Federal Grant Number G008200490, is to provide quality inservice training to regular education instructors working with preschool handicapped children and to building level regular education administrators with special education students within their buildings. Last year, due to limited funding, the project was able to provide only four free regional workshops for personnel working with preschool handicapped children in New Mexico although the original grant proposal included extensive inservice training for building level regular education administrators.

This year two free workshops will be offered which will combine inservice training for both personnel serving preschool handicapped children and regular education administrators. One is tentatively scheduled in the fall with the New Mexico Federation Council for Exceptional Children (NMF/CEC) and the second in the spring with the same group. Again, one CEU will be available to participants, if desired, and topics presented at each workshop will be chosen based upon the expressed need of those interested in attending the particular workshop.

We would appreciate your help in planning the programs. If you will complete the enclosed needs assessment instrument, we will attempt to meet your needs by providing topics of interest to you. The workshops are only one part of the project's efforts to provide quality inservice training to New Mexico personnel working with preschool handicapped children and to regular education administrators with special education students within their buildings. A description of the project is enclosed for your convenience.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete the instrument. Your responses will be very helpful in planning future workshops. If you have questions regarding the instrument or about the project, please contact us.

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This Project is funded by the Handicapped Personnel Preparation Program, Office of Special Education, U.S. Department of Education

PRESCHOOL HANDICAPPED PROJECT
SPECIAL EDUCATION COMPONENT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SPECIALTIES
BOX 3AC
NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY
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Inservice Training Needs Assessment Instrument To Identify Regional Workshop Topics for Regular Education Administrators

Directions: Please respond to all items in Part 1 and 2. We would appreciate receiving your responses even if you cannot attend one of the scheduled workshops. Feel free to duplicate this instrument for other administrators to complete.

Part I.

1. Your name_____

2. Current position_____

3. Type of program
   (Elementary, public, etc.)_____

4. Business address_____

5. City/state/zip_____

6. Business phone_____

7. Years of experience: _____Teacher
   _____Regular education administrator
   _____Special education administrator

8. Have you taken special education coursework? ____Yes ____No

9. I plan to attend at least one regional workshop.

   _____Yes _____No

10. I tentatively plan to attend the following workshop(s).

    _____Fall workshop (tentatively, Albuquerque, October)

    _____Spring workshop (tentatively, Las Cruces, March)

Part 2:

On the left side of the page, please indicate your present level of knowledge or skill for each area of training. If your level of knowledge or skill is very limited, circle 1. If your knowledge or skill level is very high, circle 5.

On the right of the page, please indicate your need for training in each area of inservice training. Circle 1 to indicate a low need and circle 5 to indicate a high perceived need.

There are no "right" or "wrong answers. We are merely interested in your perceptions regarding current levels of knowledge/skill and needs for training. (Note: special education is abbreviated SPED.)

Current knowledge/ skill						Item	Current need for training				
low					high		low				high
1.	1	2	3	4	5	Technology applications (instructional packages microcomputers, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
2.	1	2	3	4	5	What research says about effective SPED classroom management and instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	1	2	3	4	5	Current federal mandates concepts and procedures (due process; IEP's, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
4.	1	2	3	4	5	Local compliance with 1982 New Mexico SPED regulations.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	1	2	3	4	5	Roles and responsibilities of regular education (building level) administrators in SPED programs.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	1	2	3	4	5	Roles and responsibilities of special education administrators in SPED programs.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	1	2	3	4	5	Designing and maintaining accessible facilities for disabled students.	1	2	3	4	5

	Current knowledge/ skill					Item	Current need for training				
8.	1	2	3	4	5	SPED budgets, funding sources and supplies.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	1	2	3	4	5	Parent involvement in SPED programs.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	1	2	3	4	5	SPED due process and mediation practices.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	1	2	3	4	5	Tapping local and state support groups and agencies.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	1	2	3	4	5	Child abuse: identification and reporting procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	1	2	3	4	5	Rural SPED program development.	1	2	3	4	5
14	1	2	3	4	5	Working with SPED teachers and ancillary personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
						Needs and characteristics of:					
15.	1	2	3	4	5	Behaviorally disordered children (BD).	1	2	3	4	5
16.	1	2	3	4	5	Communication disordered (CD)	1	2	3	4	5
17.	1	2	3	4	5	Gifted (G).	1	2	3	4	5
18.	1	2	3	4	5	Hearing impaired (HI).	1	2	3	4	5
19.	1	2	3	4	5	Learning disabled (LD).	1	2	3	4	5
20.	1	2	3	4	5	Mentally handicapped (MH).	1	2	3	4	5
21.	1	2	3	4	5	Multiply impaired (MI).	1	2	3	4	5
22.	1	2	3	4	5	Physically impaired (PI).	1	2	3	4	5
23.	1	2	3	4	5	Severely handicapped (SH).	1	2	3	4	5
24.	1	2	3	4	5	Visually impaired (VI).	1	2	3	4	5